

a hazy shade of winter by callunavulgari

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Summary:

In November, they build a tree house.

a hazy shade of winter

Author's Note:

- For [faorism](#).

Another prompt that Faor gave me way back when:
In a dark, dark wood there was a dark, dark house
and in that dark, dark house I think we should get
drunk and fool around. (I want dirt under my
fingernails.)

In November, they build a tree house.

It's a mean-spirited, ugly thing that they've assembled from boards foraged from various backyards, lumber yards, and parking lots. A whole portion of the front half is blackened with soot, the boards having been dug free from what would have been a pretty cool bonfire if Steve hadn't stolen away with half of the material.

It isn't level, giving it a misshapen, lopsided sort of look, and the roof is missing shingles in places so that when it rains, there are terrible leaks.

All in all, it looks like a weak gust of wind could blow it straight out of its tree. It creaks and sways and is generally terrifying the first few times you're inside of it, but they had chosen a good sturdy tree with proud jutting branches and a solid trunk. It will hold them.

More importantly: it's *theirs*.

Their own private Castle Byers, Steve calls it one day, his mouth slanted into a teasing grin.

The name sticks.

Slowly, ever so slowly, they fill it with things.

Furniture. Music. Secrets.

Back in September, when the treehouse was just a collection of ideas littering Nancy's floor, they'd learned a whole new meaning to the word discretion. Nancy had always liked the idea of having a secret that no one else new. She thought that it might give a bit of character, that having something like that tucked away inside you would be exciting.

And it was. Is.

Monsters exist. There's a secret that nobody knows.

School seems easy and entirely nonthreatening when you've had a monster breathing hot air down the back of your neck, gooseflesh pimpling your skin because you don't know if it's really behind you or if your mind is playing tricks.

But Nancy can't tell people that. Her teachers don't know. Her parents don't know. Tommy and Carol don't know. It's a very exclusive club.

Keeping that secret makes her feel powerful. And she knows it's the same for the others.

Monsters exist. One of them killed my best friend.

That's the type of secret that just hurts.

This secret - their secret - is different.

The first time that Steve kisses Jonathan, they're sitting on Nancy's back porch. Steve is tactile when he kisses. He likes to push Nancy up against walls, cover her body with his own and just *touch*, his fingers light and dragging against her wrist, her breast, the ticklish curve of her ribs.

When Steve kisses Jonathan, he shoves him up against the side of the house so hard that Nancy thinks they're fighting before she sees the way that Jonathan's hands have clenched tight in Steve's hair. She recognizes the shape of Steve, touching and being touched. His hands

are on Jonathan's waist, touching first over the shirt and then slipping underneath, stroking skin. Jonathan shudders under him and groans, so loudly that Nancy startles and glances around, realizing that the only thing shielding them from the rest of the street is some sparse tree cover, the side of the house, and her narrow body.

Jonathan hisses under Steve, bucking up, and they half laugh into each others mouths, breathless with nerves and want and clutch each other tighter.

This was not planned. Though, Nancy supposes, there isn't a single ounce of her that's surprised.

She gives them another moment and then she drags them off to Jonathan's car, where she makes him drive them all the way out to Cornwallis and Kerley, to the very edge of the woods.

They have sex there, messy and unplanned.

It's good, great even, and better yet, it feels right. Sex with Steve was always nice, but with Jonathan there, it's *better*.

Jonathan's flat features give him a slightly squashed look. His eyes are too small, too squinty, beady like a lizard or a rat. She's heard the things that people call him at school, and knows that no one will ever say that he's classically handsome, not how Steve is, with his big pretty eyes and the charming slant of his smile, but Nancy likes the way that Jonathan looks when he comes. She likes how it feels to have his callused fingers digging bruises into her hips to keep her still, how his mouth looks when it's sucking bruises into the line of Steve's jaw.

They try screwing twice in Nancy's house, once in Steve's, and four times in Jonathan's, only to nearly be caught out the last time by a yawning Joyce, stumbling back in from a late shift. She raps her knuckles against Jonathan's door-frame, cracks the door open and calls out a goodnight, thankfully oblivious to the two extra teenagers in her son's bed.

"We need something better," Nancy tells them the next morning,

when they're clustered around the maple tree at school. Jonathan gnaws on a hangnail, his eyes not meeting theirs, like he's afraid that he's not allowed to look at them in public.

Steve shrugs. "Like what?"

At the end of the school day, Jonathan finds them in the parking lot. He's still nervously avoiding their eyes, darting quick, glancing looks between them, continuously dropping his gaze to their feet. Nancy doesn't seize him by the shoulders and shake him, just to make him look at them properly, but she wants to.

After a good thirty seconds of this, his spine straightens a little. He takes a breath, and looks them in the eye. She wants to kiss him, badly.

"I have an idea," he says.

It takes them three whole weeks to gather enough wood, spending their free hours darting between lots with armfuls of lumber or in the library, reading up on how to actually build the damn thing without killing themselves.

It takes them another month and a half to build it, their fingers blistering and popping and then blistering again. By the end of it they've all built up calluses on their palms and the once-tender pads of their fingers, but it's worth it for that first afternoon they spend in the creaking, horrible thing. They fuck on a blanket that Nancy's brought from home. Steve's got a handful of condoms and she's got a packet of lube that she'd swiped from the school nurse, so no one really protests when she sits down in Jonathan's lap and takes her top off.

It isn't exactly comfortable. The boards are hard under her hips and knees, the blanket providing little to no cushion, and the whole place smells of sawdust and damp. But there are no parents. No siblings.

They don't even think to go home until after it's grown dark, Jonathan and Steve insisting on driving her home even though they could both easily walk back to their own houses.

They get grounded.

After that, they're more careful. Mostly. They save the moments that they know they'll get grounded for special occasions.

On a Friday night in late November, Steve brings them a case full of shitty canned beer and they drink it on the manky striped couch that they'd wrestled up the ladder a week previous. They don't have sex, but they do kiss and touch until their lips are bruised and oversensitive, the pleasant haze of alcohol giving the night a dreamy, too-full feeling.

Nancy doesn't think of the last time that she drank shitty beer with Steve Harrington, because then she'd have to wonder what Barb would think of her now. Would Barb know about this? Or would Nancy and Jonathan and Steve be a secret from her too?

It's been a year. A *year*.

"I miss Barb," she says sleepily, her mouth pushed up against someone's shoulder. Someone - Jonathan, she thinks - squeezes her tighter and drops a kiss on the top of her head.

When Nancy falls asleep, she dreams of static and monsters and dead friends.

When she wakes up, Steve is coaching Jonathan through a blow job on the floor, his hands in Jonathan's hair and a smile on his face as they don't quite succeed in not laughing at one another.

She watches them for a little while, stretching under the blankets carefully so she doesn't reveal any bare skin to the frigid November air. It takes a few minutes for them to stop teasing each other long enough to really get into it, and by then, Nancy's warm enough to slide off the couch and onto the floor beside them.

Jonathan blinks at her, his mouth full of Steve's cock, and slurps obscenely.

Nancy snorts, pressing a quick kiss to his cheek before pushing up to her knees and kissing Steve's wet, open mouth. He responds easily, instinctively, like she'd known he would, the hand that isn't in Jonathan's hair dropping to her waist and gathering her in closer, pulling her up against him.

He kisses her back, hard, and maybe a little too fast, breathing heavily through his nose. She's getting wet, shifting her thighs together as they kiss. She can feel Jonathan's hair tickle the back of her knee.

She feels it when Steve comes, his whole body drawing up tight and his mouth going soft and slack against hers. He shivers and slumps, and she pulls away.

Jonathan is licking his lips, a contemplative expression on his face when she turns to him.

"Me next," Nancy says sweetly, and reaches for him.

She kisses Jonathan long enough to taste Steve on his tongue before he's moving away from her mouth, kissing down her breast and belly, his fingers wrapping around the back of her knee and guiding her thighs apart.

Nancy likes this part - the slow, torturous tease of it - how she clenches and aches for something inside of her. She likes to see how long she can last before she asks for it, how wet she can get, how much she can possibly take without either coming or begging. She lets him lick and suck her until she knows that his jaw is aching, and only then does she ask for it, her whole body trembling as she pulls him up to her and lets him slide inside. She gasps, once, raggedly, and comes explosively, her hips stuttering against his.

"Keep going," she gasps raggedly, her entire body hitching against his. "Harder. Please."

He buries his face in her neck and does just that, fucking her to pieces as she shudders around him, working her higher and harder, faster and faster, until she's babbling something, his name or Steve's,

or maybe just breathless fragments of sound that aren't words at all.

She comes again when Steve reaches over and rubs the heel of his palm over her clit, and this time Jonathan follows her over.

Nancy kisses them both after, slow and sweet, and thinks that if she let herself, she could spend every day here with them, just like this. There's no electricity in their little treehouse, but they have sex and food and board games. She could stay here between them, *just like this*, with dirt under her fingernails and come on her belly, where secrets just don't fucking matter.

Instead, she gets dressed and they traipse through dead brown leaves together.